

MEMORANDUM

DECLASSIFIED  
PA/HO Department of State  
E.O. 12958, as amended  
August 6, 2007

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/CONFIDENTIAL~~  
July 14, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER  
SUBJECT: My Talks with Chou En-lai

Introduction

My two-day visit to Peking resulted in the most searching, sweeping and significant discussions I have ever had in government. I spent seventeen hours in meetings and informal conversation with Chou En-lai, flanked by Marshal Yeh Chien-ying, member of the Politburo and of the Military Commission; Huang Hua, the new Chinese Ambassador in Ottawa; and Chang Wen-chin, head of the West European and American Department in the Foreign Ministry. Another four hours was spent with Huang and Chang, mostly on drafting a communique. These meetings brought about a summit meeting between you and Mao Tse-Tung, covered all major issues between our two countries at considerable length and with great candor, and may well have marked a major new departure in international relations.

It is extremely difficult to capture in a memorandum the essence of this experience. Simply giving you a straightforward account of the highlights of our talks, potentially momentous as they were, would do violence to an event so shaped by the atmosphere and the ebb and flow of our encounter, or to the Chinese behavior, so dependent on nuances and style. Thus, this memorandum will sketch the overall sequence of events and philosophic framework, as well as the substance of our exchanges. For the intangibles are crucial and we must understand them if we are to take advantage of the opportunities we now have, deal effectively with these tough, idealistic, fanatical, single-minded and remarkable people, and thus transform the very framework of global relationships.

[Omitted here is material not pertinent to the proposed five-power conference.]

Arms Control

I asked for their views on the Soviet proposal on a five power nuclear conference, reminding him that you had held up our response so as to get Chinese views. They flatly rejected the idea as a Soviet attempt to lasso them. I said we would be slow in our response; that other countries' pressures might force us to go along; and that if such a conference were held we would seek to make sure that China was not put at a disadvantage. On SALT I assured them we would conclude no agreement directed against them, and that we recognized that limiting their embryonic strategic program at this time would be discriminatory. I said we were willing to discuss accidental war agreements with them such as we were discussing with the Russians; Chou replied that we could raise this with them whenever we wished. I added that we were prepared to consider a renunciation of force agreement such as Chou had proposed in 1955. He responded in low key that Taiwan was linked to this issue and immediately went on to say he hoped my Paris Talks with the North Vietnamese would bear fruit.